

I think my first memory at Tapestry was when I was five or six. Reverend John told us to close our eyes as he threw a deck of cards at the ceiling and somehow, the card my sister had picked just moments before was clinging there. I'm not really sure why I remember this particular moment so vividly, as it doesn't really hold a flame to the years of discovery and learning I've had at Tapestry, but I think it, in some sort of way, speaks to what Tapestry is all about. We are all here for some reason or another, and that reason for me is the same feeling I had when I saw that card on the ceiling nearly ten years ago. It's that feeling of astonishment, enlightenment, a feeling that something greater than myself is at work that keeps me coming back every Sunday. Well that and the coffee and treats anyways.

But that certainly isn't my only memory from Tapestry. I remember walking down to the baseball fields at our first church location to pick up trash. It was hot, it was far, and it was hard work, and yet there was nothing I would rather spend my Sunday morning doing, as it really felt good. I remember picking leftover fruits and vegetables and sneaking a bite of the hardest carrot I have ever had, and I remember bringing presents to a family over the holidays where I tried the best and spiciest hot chocolate in the world. With Tapestry, I learned the importance of volunteering in my community from a young age. I learned to volunteer not when it counted for hours or for awards, but when it was simply the right thing to do.

Recently I think a lot of you resonated with the explanation "We came for the kids and stayed for the people", but as one of those kids I think I can expand on this. I was in second grade the first time I had to try and explain what a Unitarian Universalist was to my friends at school. I was just a few words into my description, when the kid who had already lost interest in my "free and true search for meaning" shouted to the teacher that "Ryan doesn't believe in Jesus!" I didn't really see why that was anything to yell about at the time, as I had just learned about Jesus the other day in my religious ed class. He seemed like a great guy, but I didn't see why I had to give some special sort of meaning to him, when I had learned about Buddha the week before, and Allah the week before that. With so many explanations for meaning in this world, why would anyone want to limit themselves to one just one? Regardless of how I felt, I told people for a while that Unitarian Universalism was somewhere under the large umbrella of Christianity, as I didn't think my opinion would be met with the best reception. That is, until I went for the first time to Camp Debenerville Pines. After connecting with Unitarian Universalism on a deeper level, I proudly told people that I was a Unitarian Universalist, and told them to google it if they didn't understand my description, as it turns out Wikipedia does us some pretty good justice. I no longer cared what others thought, because I saw that there was an amazing community of UU's out there that I was a part of. So as a kid, I stuck around for the people too.

I remember my parents talking about our family budget one time over dinner. When talking about our church, my dad asked my mom "How much can we afford to give". That surprised me, because I always thought that if we just gave \$100 less than we could afford, we would have that much more for fancy dinners at the Rainforest Cafe, or fun trips to Wild Rivers. But after a decade at Tapestry, I understand why. Tapestry had connected us with the best people we know, given us amazing values, and taught us to stay open to the world. These are gifts which could never be paid back in full, but it made sense that we should do our best to try.